

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 1128

By Vital

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Zennia Nesmith on being named the 2022 Tennessee Community College Student of the Year.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we should pay tribute to those students who, through their natural talents and unflagging commitment to academic excellence, have distinguished themselves in the classroom; and

WHEREAS, Zennia Nesmith of Chattanooga State Community College is one such exceptional student who was recently named the 2022 Tennessee Community College Student of the Year at the SOAR awards sponsored by the Tennessee Board of Regents; and

WHEREAS, an adult learner, Zennia Nesmith has followed a path to higher education that has been full of twists, turns, and bumps along the way, which path has strengthened her resolve and instilled a deep responsibility to pave the way for others; and

WHEREAS, raised by her grandmother after her parents became addicted to drugs, Ms. Nesmith was hospitalized after a failed suicide attempt while she was a senior in high school, making it impossible for her to graduate; and

WHEREAS, going straight to work after being released from a psychiatric hospital, she became a mother with a daughter just a few years later; becoming a mother created an urgency within her to be able to better provide financially for her daughter; and

WHEREAS, after enrolling in the GED program at Chattanooga State, Ms. Nesmith completed her GED a year after her daughter's birth. Tragedy struck a few years later when her grandmother was killed, and her young daughter was severely injured with a traumatic brain injury as the result of a horrific car accident; and

WHEREAS, this tragedy led to Zennia Nesmith finding her life's purpose when she founded a nonprofit organization called Empowered Connections with Siskin Hospital to support other families who have children with physical and intellectual disabilities—a role she felt called to do as she struggled to care for her daughter; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Nesmith knew she needed to earn a college degree to expand the work of her nonprofit, but she felt like she would never be able to afford it. The Tennessee Reconnect scholarship program enabled her to enroll at Chattanooga State in the Spring 2020 semester at no cost; and

WHEREAS, during her enrollment at Chattanooga State, Zennia Nesmith has not relinquished her commitment for making the most of every single opportunity. She has maintained a perfect 4.0 GPA, joined the Global Scholars Honors program, made Dean's List, and been awarded the highly competitive Beacon Scholarship; and

WHEREAS, her academic accomplishments and recognitions pale in comparison to the contributions she has made on the campus of Chattanooga State Community College and in the local community; her contributions as a student leader are innumerable and collectively demonstrate her passions for advocacy, service, and justice; and

WHEREAS, Zennia Nesmith personifies the spirit of our Tennessee community colleges and the Tennessee Promise and Tennessee Reconnect programs; she has overcome many obstacles to make her dreams of earning a college degree a reality and has simultaneously excelled academically; and

WHEREAS, Zennia Nesmith's dedication to excellence is clearly deserving of the respect, admiration, and commendation of the members of this General Assembly; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE

CONCURRING, that we commend and honor Zennia Nesmith upon being named the 2022 Tennessee Community College Student of the Year, salute her impressive academic achievements, and extend to her our best wishes for a happy, successful future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy and upon proper request made to the appropriate clerk, the language appearing immediately following the State seal appear without House or Senate designation.